



CHARLES LORING ELLIOTT.

## I.—HIS EARLIER ARTISTIC LIFE.\*

ON the morning of the twelfth anniversary of the conflagration of Moscow, a stinging winter day, while the boys were sliding down hill, and the sleigh-bells were merrily ringing through the beautiful village of Auburn (New York), a youngster—who must have been, according to the records of the parish church of Scipio, if said records were properly kept, about ten years old—might have been seen, but probably was not, taking a clay furnace of ig-

nited charcoal into a small bedroom on the ground-floor of a plain but comfortable dwelling-house, which was situated near the centre of the afore-mentioned village, then and since celebrated for its two well-regulated institutions, the State Prison and the Theological Seminary, intended by legislators and pious people to be the balance-wheels of society. When the urchin had safely deposited his furnace on the floor of the apartment he left it in haste for the kitchen, and soon reappeared with a broomstick, which, on entering his bedroom once more, he forced through the door-latch, that he might be able to prosecute his undertaking without fear of interruption from any unwelcome visitors. The reader will soon discover that these formidable preparations betokened an enterprise of no little magnitude. He must first be enlightened in regard to several matters which were more or less intimately con-

\* This first portion was written in 1850 (mainly as it now appears), at the suggestion and request of some intimate friends of Elliott, for the purpose of preserving an *authentic* account of his earlier artistic life. After it had been emended and finished to our satisfaction we had a limited number of copies printed for special circulation. This was nearly twenty years ago. It is hardly possible that a sketch so entirely authentic and sharply minute could be prepared at this period.

C. E. L.

nected with the events of that particular day. So leaving the urchin to his solitude, we may briefly glance at his previous history, which will be likely to cast the light of probable conjecture upon his present design.

His father was an architect of considerable mechanical genius, and many of "the principal men" of the neighborhood were indebted to his taste and skill for the somewhat imposing mansions which drew the attention of passing travelers. Like all good fathers, when they can, he sent his boy regularly to the district school.

He had at a very early period displayed a taste for artistic mechanism, and most of his leisure hours and holidays were spent in his father's work-shop, from which he had sent forth sleds, wagons, wind-mills, and saw-mills, of many different sizes, but of very beautiful workmanship, which gave him a reputation among the young folks of being the most consummate operator of this kind in the village. But a dangerous rival had appeared in the school, who threatened by his skill as a draughtsman of horses—on the slate—to eclipse the fame of the hitherto unrivaled constructor. But this artist's genius seemed to have a somewhat limited range, since he always made the *same* horse, although, by dint of hard practice, he had succeeded in representing that particular animal in a very respectable state; and since the versatility of his talent was not brought in question by his critics, he was luxuriating in the wealth of his fame.

The architect's son began to feel the stirrings of ambition, and he secretly determined to distance his rival on his own field. He collected all the pictures of horses he could lay his hands on, and began his studies on the slate. A common observer, however, could make little more out of these first attempts than oblong bodies with four uprights, evidently intended to represent horses' legs. But he gradually improved, until, with all his drawings, he began to draw on his rival. Not satisfied, however, with his success, he kept his secret and obstinately persevered, trying his subject in one position for a while, and then in another; but he grew less and less satisfied with his performances, and thinking he had "gone to work at the wrong end," he cast aside all his picture-models and *began to study from life*. He watched horses as they passed in the streets, went to the stables to examine their limbs and proportions; but he still found it "no easy matter to draw a good horse." "Why is it," he said, "that I can't draw one good horse in a month, while that fellow can draw fifty in a day?"

The mystery was not completely solved by him for years, for the good reason that its solution opens the whole arcana of art. Long afterward he discovered that while his rival had, by dint of sheer manipulation, succeeded in copying a horse standing still, without life or action, and succeeded commendably well, he had done

it only as a mechanic; while he himself went to work on his ideal—a horse in motion, in any attitude; for the innocent young soul thought one attitude as easy to draw as another. He had done a great thing, however, in beginning *to draw as an artist*, little as he knew what he was doing. He had been making *the* horse his study, and not any particular horse in one particular attitude. The difference was as great between him and his rival as between the dunce who learns by rote to scan the first book of the *Æneid* glibly and the scholar who reads Tacitus with delight and Horace with enthusiasm. The one was overcoming only the difficulties of imitating a stiff, hard, unyielding form; the other was learning principles of art which would enable him to master *all* forms. But the dear boy knew not that he had begun as Giotto began: to draw the forms of the sheep he watched on the sunny slopes of the Tuscan hills; to represent life by lines without color. He was "out of patience with himself for his stupidity!" Long afterward he learned that he had lost his patience because he could not do in his tenth year what cost the old masters so much toil.

But light began to break in on the path of his studies. Gleam after gleam came out from his pencilings. He could at last draw a horse hitched to a post, or chafing under the spur, with swelling veins, snorting nostrils, and prancing feet. At last "it mattered little to him what his horse must do." He could make him do one thing as well as another. He had passed the Rubicon of Art, although he still knew so little what he had done. But judging of himself as he judged his rival, he "thought his horse could pass muster." Having now, as patiently as he could, endured the reproach of defeat for several weeks, the time which he had bided had at last come.

One evening he drew a fine, prancing horse, full of mettle, with flowing mane and tail, and laying his slate up carefully on the kitchen mantle-piece he went to bed. All night long squadrons of prancing horses danced on his vision. In the morning he took down his slate, and hurrying off to school before the usual hour, showed his drawing to one of his little friends, who had taken his part from the beginning, and asked him privately "how he liked it." The noble little sympathizer's eyes (we have always had a liking for that boy since we heard the story) grew as large as saucers—tiny ones. He could hardly trust his senses. He gazed intently on the picture, seized the slate, and when he could contain himself rushed across the school-room, and thrusting it triumphantly before the face of the *still-horse* boy, said, "Now, old feller, make a horse like *that*—you can't do it." There was no retreat; he was in the lists with his rival. He was to have one day to copy the *prancing* horse. He tried and failed. "Well," said the hitherto unrivaled draughtsman of still-horses, "now let him try *my* horse. I can't do *his'n*, and he can't do *mine*." This, too, was fair play. His antago-



nist also was to have a day. He did it during the ten minutes the school were at play. At noon the still-horse was shown. Even the still-horse boy acknowledged that "he had done it." Thus ended the conflict, and after that day young Elliott had as many horses to draw for his comrades as he had hitherto had of sleds, wagons, and wind-mills.

We have told this story in all its detail because it is a miniature history of the life of every true artist. We find such things in the lives of all great painters. But we must return to the youngster in his bedroom (which occurred some time later than "the horse trial"), for the chances are that before now his enterprise has got under way, nor should we be surprised if the furnace of ignited charcoal had already begun to work.

The boy shut up in that bedroom we need hardly say is the one who made so many laborious slate-studies on the horse. He had distanced all competitors in horses, and begun to extend the field of his operations. He abandoned the slate for India ink and crayons. At last he resolved to make an essay in oil-painting. Keeping his own counsels, "that no one might laugh at him," he procured a rather huge canvas, with the requisite utensils, and we now find him shut up in that little bedroom, on that "bitter cold day," attempting to copy a picture in the History of England—"The Conflagration of Moscow." But this expedition to Moscow was likely to become to the young painter even more fatal than it had proved to Napoleon himself. The dinner hour came round, but he did not show himself. Some time passed, and his mother became anxious. A search was made for him every where. Having occasion to visit the bedroom, his mother found the door fastened. She ran to the outside window, through which she saw her son sitting in his chair, his head fallen down on his breast, apparently asleep. She rapped on the window and called, but received no answer. She forced the window open, when a sight of the charcoal furnace explained the mystery to the frightened mother, who "supposed that her Charlie was dead." She sprang through the window, and rushing to his side, shook him violently; but he showed no sign of life. And there on the chair before him stood "Moscow Burning," a rude but bold sketch, in which the idea of the artist was not to be mistaken. By his side on a little stand lay the open History of England, from which he had copied—his pallet and brushes fallen from his hands; and to all appearances the young artist had painted his first and last oil-picture. But the rush of winter air soon revived him, and in a few hours he was as well as ever.

This narrow escape was far enough from curing the boy of his passion for painting; but it taught him how much better is charcoal for sketching than for breathing. He afterward finished "The Conflagration," and a good judge who saw it said it was an astonishing produc-

tion for a boy of his age, who had received no instruction whatever in art, and who had never before attempted to paint in oil. Elliott said of it: "It couldn't, of course, have been any great thing as a picture, but it was generally acknowledged that it made an excellent *fire-board*."

It is pretty evident that ideas of art were now growing into shape in the mind of the boy, and we are not much surprised that he "made up his mind that, for better or worse, he would be a painter"—a resolution he seems to have adhered to pretty obstinately, until he has won for himself a reputation in the acquisition of which any man may have considered himself fortunate had it cost him a lifetime of unceasing toil.

About this time his father had employed two men of doubtful genius in that line "to landscape" the parlor of a house he was finishing, and they had gone on daubing the walls by the yard with all sorts of enormities in the shape of woods, waters, and animals, without much regard to the laws which the Almighty originally intended should control the animal, mineral, or vegetable kingdoms. While these worthies were gone to dinner one day, Charlie, who was sure to know what was going on in the limits of the narrow artistic world around him, entered the room, and seizing up one of the pallets, sketched a bridge with a man walking over. He "worked quick and fled." When the men returned they honestly expressed their amazement and delight, and to their immortal honor "they allowed the bridge to stand, with the walking man." It may have been a no very great thing, and probably was so considered by the next proprietor of the mansion, for he had all the wall embellishments decently covered over with paper, not excepting "the bridge and the man walking over it"—which may be carefully uncovered some day. Stranger things have happened.

Charles L. Elliott used to talk with his young friends about art and artists (these associates still remember it all), and "what would be the end of all this" they could not tell. Some of them, in a certain way, entered into his feelings, but many of his hours and days were left without sympathy, and he "was driven to books for comfort and company." He became a great reader, especially of two kinds—those that described battles, and those which spoke about artists. After exhausting his father's library he used to borrow from neighbors. Chance put him in possession of a large Biographical Dictionary, and he hunted all through its thousand pages in his eleventh year, and read a great many times over its accounts of painters and sculptors, engineers and engravers, who had become famous in past ages. The miscarriage of his "charcoal picture" had not cured him of great subjects. He was fond of "battle-pieces, Scripture scenes, and heroic subjects." He copied in oil many of the pictures in the old Family Bible. "Ahasuerus and Esther" was

of no little merit; it is still in the artist's possession.

Some good instruction in art would now have been a world to him. But Auburn at that period had no artist's studio, and he had to work his way on in the dark, as West, the father of painting in this country, did, with only nature to help him. In his fifteenth year Elliott's father removed to Syracuse, which was then (1827) but a hamlet with a handful of people. Heavy forest trees were then growing where churches, villas, and groaning warehouses now stand. The site of the great railway dépôt was then "an irredeemable marsh." But a spirit of civilized bustle was beginning, and Clinton's canal would do the rest. Elliott's father had never troubled himself much about his son's paints and brushes. He considered it "a freak of boyhood that would give way to better things when the time came." But finding the freak likely to last longer than he "calculated" he determined to put a stop to it, or at all events train up the lad to some occupation more likely to keep him out of the poor-house.

So "Charles" was put behind the counter of a dry-goods and grocery store, in which his father was a partner. "Now, Charles, you may make up your mind to give up your picture business." But it happened that "of all things in the wide world *that* was the very thing he had determined never to do—poor-house or palace—come what might." Mr. Elliott *père* happened to be more proprietor of the dry-goods and groceries than he was of the painter; and customers who wanted to make careful inquiries on "the prices of Bohea tea, starch, cut-nails, New England rum, molasses, and Webster's spelling-books, and sich like," were left to solve their own problems, while Charlie retired to some garret, or out of the way nook or corner of Syracuse, to copy an engraving of Inman's "Fisher-Boy."

Things were now going on badly. In about three months Mr. Elliott informed the young gentleman that he must enter the store of a very worthy Scotchman, where, as the father had no interest, the son "would be obliged to walk Spanish." He entered; but in about another three months the worthy Scotch merchant took Mr. Elliott *père* aside, and quietly expressed "some, yes, *serious* doubts about his son's ever making a *very* great merchant." Mr. Elliott himself finally began to fear that "those paints and brushes" would prove too strong for him, and he sent his son to an academy of some repute in Onondaga Hollow. Here he had to go through "a routine not much more to his taste than dry-goods and groceries," particularly when he had some "great picture" on hand—and once more a three months' trial had turned out a failure. His father became "satisfied that even academies were not the thing." "Charles had studied very little, and painted a great deal; but he *had* painted a landscape, embracing the academy, which pleased us all." This clause in the report of Charlie's term had its effect. A point

of some importance in this narrative is, that this picture was what the painter long afterward spoke of as "my first *sober* attempt at delineation from nature, *strictly speaking*."

The academician went home, and found his father in a different state of mind. No change had perhaps taken place in his mind about the profitableness of painting pictures; but, like other sensible men, he "made the best of it," and was prepared to negotiate. Nothing more was said about "dry-goods and groceries" or "academies." These offensive subjects were not even brought up; and therefore something was likely to be done, since both "the high contracting parties" met on terms of equality. And here let us not be misunderstood. In all these trials and tests to which the father subjected the son he not only displayed true affection, but true common-sense. There is no error more fatal, nor one into which spirited boys so often fall, as to think they are born for something better than the common business of life. The world staggers under the curse of incompetency in all its high places. We have a hundred pettifoggers where we have one lawyer—a hundred daubers to one painter. It was a thousand to one that Mr. Elliott would not find in his son the all-excelling portrait painter. So we find no fault with Mr. Elliott. And it was doubtless the best thing for the boy—it *was part of his training*. If a young man has in him the passion for art too deep to be eradicated by opposition—an enthusiasm too blood-felt to be chilled by ridicule, rebuke, or rebuff—he will work his way. If he can not withstand and finally surmount such obstacles his blade is not made of Damascus steel.

Young Elliott's best and fairest test was now coming. His father had large contracts for building. Architectural drawing was an important branch of the business, and when he made known to his son his desire to have his best assistance, it was faithfully pledged. The compact was fairly entered into, and honorably fulfilled on both sides. Partly as a necessary facility to his progress, and partly to gratify his taste, he was sent to a select school for two years, where he was contented, because he could follow congenial studies, and when his father wanted any help, artistic and well-executed drawings were always furnished by the willing artist. Discerning the irremediable bent of his genius, and wishing to divert it exclusively to architecture, he procured for him elaborate and costly works in that range of art, and so accurate and beautiful was every design and combination the builder called for executed he became proud of his son's talent, and was happy in the fact that he could turn these gifts to advantage. "Art seemed now not to be squinting quite so straight to the poor-house."

During this period Elliott made a profound study of architecture and drawing in their application to practical use in common edifices—in chastening the proportions of dwellings, elaborating, and refining, and embellishments of



porticoes, windows, mantles, reliefs, etc. He suggested many tasteful and valuable models for his father, which proved essentially useful. But this study soon lost what little charm it had for "the young man who was born to be a portrait painter." His "long thinkings about the future" ended in his asking his father's consent to come to New York "to learn to be a painter." This was at once granted, and the glad day of freedom came. He started, too, with as generous a provision as his wants required.

Here the young painter made his way at once with a letter of introduction to Colonel Trumbull, who had his studio at the time in the old Academy of Fine Arts, of which he was then President. The veteran painter examined all the candidate's drawings, and one or two of his essays in oil, and then "strongly advised him to give up all idea of becoming a painter, and to apply himself wholly to architecture." "I do this," said the Colonel, "for two reasons. You don't seem to possess so much genius for painting as for architecture; and you will make a better living in this country by the latter profession. America will yet be a great field for the architect, and you certainly indicate *uncommon talents that way*."

Elliott respectfully replied that "he had gratified all his architectural propensities *up in the country*, and was fully determined, and had been ever since he was ten years old, to be a painter, and live or die by that business." It was very natural for Trumbull, on the evidence before him, to give that advice; for young Elliott had bestowed little care upon any thing but architectural drawing; and as these drawings seen by the great painter indicated extraordinary genius, he was fully justified in his opinion.

"Let me dissuade you, my young friend," replied Trumbull, "from this resolution by the history of my own life. I have devoted many years to my art, and from my career you can judge all you may hope for, even if you should be very successful. I have, it is true, received some commissions from Congress for national pictures, but this was only a piece of good luck. Aside from this what shall I say? I have painted a great many pictures which have been praised by connoisseurs, and amateurs, and artists; and yet you see hanging around this room nearly all the works on which I expended the principal energies of my artistic life. People come, and admire them, and go away; and yet here are nearly all the pictures of almost half a century of labor. I am now an old man, and time and disappointment have chilled my ambition. I have waked from the dream of life, and its *reality*, death, is looking steadily on me. My principal solicitude now is to make some good disposition of this gallery, which I think will yet have value even in the estimation of my own countrymen. I must take time to look about and see if I have friends enough in the world to give these pictures to."

"This was said," remarked Elliott himself, in narrating the facts, "with a sad feeling. He

seemed to feel that the world had not done him justice, and I have long felt so myself. But, although I could hardly help weeping at the sight of the gray-haired painter, grown sad, and perhaps misanthropic by disappointment and neglect, yet it didn't discourage me much. I thought the world would treat other painters better, and I was determined to run my chance. Seeing me resolute he said 'he would transgress the rules of the Academy, which admitted students only during the winter, and allow me to visit the Antique Gallery. He had a good deal of leisure time, and would give me instruction in drawing, and furnish me the necessary apparatus.' I began immediately, and I am happy to say that he more than redeemed his pledge. I owe much to the good old man, and I shall always be proud to own it."

Elliott remained a considerable time with Trumbull, and applied himself with great industry and earnestness to *correct draughting*. His progress was evident enough. But still Trumbull, who, during the later years of his life, advised all young painters to turn cobblers, insisted upon Elliott's becoming an architect. "But," Elliott said, "do what I could for the old man, I could not agree with him." And he went to study with Quidor, a fellow-pupil with Inman under Jarvis.

"While I was with Quidor," says Elliott, "I spent most of my time in copying prints in oil, which, for want of a better market, I sent to the auction; for, being determined to support myself, it had now become with me *most decidedly* a question of bread and butter."

It was not long, however, before he began to paint portraits, at any price he could get; and although these early efforts could not of course indicate much knowledge of the practice or principles of art as taught in the schools, "yet" (as Inman once said to the writer) "there was in Elliott's portraits, *from the beginning*, an air of fidelity, earnestness, and truth; there was warm and genial expression, and a rich, glowing, generous coloring in his rude portraits which make them still charming to look at, even to those who are not familiar with his later masterly creations."

He said "sometimes during this period how glad he would have been if he could have had the opportunity of painting *some things* besides portraits—especially if he could devote some years to a careful, elaborate, and persevering course of study in the principles and the practice of correct delineation."

While in Quidor's studio with some four or five other young men who have since been heard from (among them Colonel T. B. Thorpe), Elliott went off on another "great picture"—"The Battle of Christina," drawn from "Knick-erbocker's History of New York," in which Peter Stuyvesant and his wooden leg are very conspicuous characters. It is perhaps safe to say that even to this time that is the only *great* historical representation of that decisive battle, which terminated after ten hours of hard

fighting without the loss of a man on either side!

After a year of hard work Elliott returned to pass a winter with his friends, painting, in the mean while, a great number of excellent portraits. The following spring he resumed his labors in New York, and with considerable success. In the intervals of his portrait painting he threw off two compositions of peculiar merit—"The Bold Dragoon," and a spirited illustration of Paulding's "Dutchman's Fireside," which were exposed for sale in a shop-window. Trumbull, who had not met Elliott since he left his studio, happened to see them while walking leisurely by "in the style of a gentleman of the old school." "Who painted these pictures?" he asked of the shop-keeper. "Elliott, Colonel Trumbull." "Where is his room?"

He hurried to the place, knocked, and entering uncovered with all the stateliness of the last century, said to the young artist: "You can go on painting, Sir. You need not follow architecture. I wish you good-day, Sir," and withdrew. Elliott never saw him again.

Banishment from the inspiring scenes of nature to a man who loved her so well could not last long; and, "tired of the city and the city's ways, I determined," he said to a friend, "to go back into the country for a considerable period." And, fixed in this purpose, he returned to the region where his boyhood had been passed. There he lacked not employment; "and above all," said he, "I found more satisfaction in the honest way of doing things among old neighbors and friends than can be found in great towns, and I am satisfied I painted better pictures."

The next ten years he passed chiefly in Central New York—ten of the brightest and best years of his life. Elliott's love of nature was deep as the earnest, true man ever feels for any thing, and tender, trusting, and filial as a child's. Nor did he cultivate this love of nature as a misanthropist, for his great heart was large enough for all that is true and generous. He once said: "There is something very great and inspiring in fine scenery; but what would it all amount to without the society of friends? After all, there is nothing in all nature like a fine *human face*. Portrait painting is a big thing when it is portrait painting."

While painting the portraits of the Faculty of Hamilton College (Oneida County, New York) Elliott fell in with Huntington (now President of the National Academy of Art), a young student, whose portrait he painted with great care—a picture which even now would not be thrown into the back-ground of any collection. The meeting of those two young men in that secluded place will hereafter furnish suggestive matter for the pen or pencil of some true artist, who, when the men now living have rested from their labors, will conjure up beautiful thoughts and glowing images to thrill the fancy and touch the heart of future times. Already the world loves both their names.

It can hardly be known, while Elliott lives, how many portraits he painted during these ten years of country life; but (carefully and conscientiously as he always painted) the number must have been very great. We find, too, in comparing his pictures at the beginning and the end of these ten years, that he had made astonishing progress in his art. He was never stiff, or clumsy, or cold; but gradually grace, and ease, and warmth, and high feeling, stole into the forms on his canvas, until he reached the point—which every true painter and writer reaches on his road to excellence—when *all* things undertaken are ennobled, and forms of real beauty come forth clothed with celestial light.

Nor were those ten years of exile from the heated air of artificial life lost in any sense whatever. Nature sometimes asserts her right to nurse her great children on her own breast, and Providence comes to her aid. The schools can not do much except for common men. Nature is the great teacher; from her the highest and deepest lessons are learned. But Elliott had learned those lessons; he "had staid in the country long enough;" he "needed the electric influences of metropolitan life;" he "felt that he could now go to New York with real pleasure and brush up," "for I had begun to get lazy."

But once in the metropolis he "had to begin his career anew." His old circle had been broken up. Some of his patrons and friends had gone abroad, many "gone West," and "not a few were dead." But he got a studio, and went to work with a serious and fixed "purpose to do something *worth while* in art." He sent some of his best portraits ("for," said he, "by this time I had thrown aside every thing but portraits—I wasn't made for any thing else") to the Academy, and had the satisfaction of knowing that an unbiased judgment had set upon them the seal of judicious and enlightened approbation. He now went on painting with industry and conscientiousness any and all portraits that were offered. But there was nothing in the man or his pictures of the *sensation style*. In the very depths of his honest soul he "hated the whole thing; only let us have fair play." His reputation grew rather slow, but it was to be enduring.

He met with no great "success" till 1845, when his picture of Colonel Ericsson excited universal admiration. The best judges unhesitatingly said it was the best American portrait since Stuart. This soon became the general feeling, and that feeling has been growing, until now (1850) Elliott stands unquestionably at the head of the portrait painters of his time.

The following year (1846) a considerable number of his pictures were sent to the Academy—among others those of Horatio Stone (the sculptor, now in Rome), T. B. Thorpe, Clarke (of the *Knickerbocker*), and Thayer, which seemed to be regarded, especially by the best judges, as the finest work Elliott had yet done. The



latter was one of the finest subjects the painter is ever favored with. In transparent honesty of likeness, in earnestness of expression, in geniality of feeling, in deep, rich flesh-tints which come out from fine faces around the fireside of home, and, above all, in the spirituality of the man's individual human soul, "the Thayer picture" (as every body called it) created the same impression upon every body. In the estimation of his own countrymen Elliott's place was now defined. Competent foreign judges among us soon ratified the sentence of America.

In recalling that year (1846) we can never forget how sad the world of art was made by the too-early death of Henry Inman. He had just returned from Great Britain with his executed commissions of the portraits of Wordsworth, Chalmers, etc. His works had commanded universal admiration, as the man had inspired the deepest love. He had none of the jealousies which so often mar the magnanimity of contemporary artists, and although the world was ringing with Elliott's praises, and he had not met him for many years, yet he said, "I must choose the first fine day to go to Elliott's studio—he is painting so superbly, and he is so fine a fellow." Inman's friends saw that his life was drawing to a close, although he did not seem to notice the shadow that was moving over his path. We all felt that it would have been cruel to pluck from his "hope-illuminated brow" those last golden beams which the genial sun was casting as he went to his setting.

Inman entered Elliott's studio, and gave him the thin white hand and loving look of the great-hearted artist, and sat down. Still looking at him with a tenderness all his own, he finally said, after much friendly and sunny talk: "My dear Elliott, when I shall have somewhat recovered my health and spirits we must exchange portraits. I have never been quite so well painted as I desire. Nothing will give me more pleasure than to paint yours, except to have you paint mine."

They pledged each other that the first work they were to do after Inman got ready should be this courteous exchange of the fruits of their gifted pencils. It must have been a touching scene to them; for it is impossible for those two men not to have known that in that studio were then standing the first two portrait painters in America. Poor Inman pressed Elliott's hand kindly, and gave him his characteristic "Good-by," just as we do so carelessly when we expect to meet again in a day or two.

Inman returned to his home, never to leave it again till we bore him in that wild winter day to his home at Greenwood. The friends of art will never cease to regret that those portraits were never exchanged.

"Elliott is now painting great pictures all the time." These words were uttered a few days ago by one of the dearest and best names in this country, for which, in another department of the highest culture, he has done more perhaps than any other man. We have not the

space, even if we could, to make out the list of all Elliott's portraits executed up till the present time which will be considered well worthy of preserving. As this sketch is but the merest outline of Elliott's artistic life thus far, we shall close it by a word or two concerning the chief characteristics of his portraits, and inquire in what the power and charm of his genius for portraiture consist.

1. Extreme fidelity of likeness—this is the starting-point; without it there can be no complete portrait painting. When we look on one of Elliott's portraits we feel that he must have known not only the peculiarities of the person's face and form, but that he must have read intimately and genially the spirit of the character. In all his pictures we can trace the decisive points of the individuality—the prevailing expression.

2. But having observed that all Elliott's people, like Vandyck's, *look well*, we naturally ask, "How is this? all people are not good-looking." True, but it so happens that artists of reputation either *choose* good subjects, or, as Elliott once said, "People who want good portraits are generally apt to be good-looking themselves." Art, however, claims the right of portraying the best expression. It is the attribute of the pencil, as it is of love, to usurp those golden moments of enchantment, when every look is wreathed with fascination, when every smile breathes voluptuousness, when every glance flashes with a higher passion than the common observer sees.

There should be—and is there not?—some holy spot left in the heart of every man and woman from which something joyous, touching, loving, humane at least, and perhaps divine, will now and then come forth with a flash which, when genius holds the pencil, sets the canvas all aglow. Elliott used to say, "Every face almost *ought* to make a good picture."

We take it for granted that when Elliott paints a portrait he can not miss a likeness—nor a good picture. The first point is gained by accurate delineation—the rest follows by a skillful arrangement of position, light, shadow, and the artistic *blending* of all the accessories, and the *infusion* of the sentiment of the subject into the whole work. This brings the picture out on the sunny side of each sitter's better life. This charm belonged to Elliott, and his magnetic genius infused it into all he painted. When the man Elliott has painted looks on his own picture he becomes, in spite of himself, a better man. He is inspired with purer imaginations, tenderer sentiments, and loftier purposes. He goes away from the portrait more generous in impulse, purer in fancy, and more courteous in manner. In a word, there is something in Elliott's painting not unlike that *spirituelle aura* that pervades the writings and breathed from the form and manner of William Ellery Channing, who sanctified the atmosphere around him by the perfect human sympathy he every where inspired. We feel while we read

the writings of the one as we do when we look on the portraits of the other. We go away, and as our better nature speaks to us from the inspiration given, we feel that the world is better, and life worth more than it was before.

## II.—LATER ARTISTIC LIFE.

The foregoing sketch left Elliott on the threshold of his fame. Long years of patient toil were to fix the verdict of history. He had reached the point on which the eye of every true artist rests from the beginning of his career. Subjects came to him without seeking, and he could now enforce upon the tyrant of circumstances the despotism once imposed on himself. He could paint when and whom he pleased. "This was a great comfort to me," he once said, "for I never liked even the *thought* of slighting *any* picture, and I was glad to be placed beyond the *temptation*."

We need not enumerate even the best of Elliott's pictures; the world knows them by heart, as it does the names of Irving's and Cooper's books—a word tells the whole story. Elliott was throughout life a great, unspoiled child of Nature. He loved her in the depths of his soul. He communed with her there—there he heard her own language, and in his pictures he gave her utterances to the world. He loved all her works, but man the most, for he was her last and greatest. And of this human form, the noblest part of it, the human face, was the study and the worship of his life.

For twenty years now he lived a serene, cheerful, beautiful life. He painted many of the first, the fairest, and the best forms of the nation. Happy are the possessors of his works. Of him it may be said with truth, each of his portraits is an historical picture.

If the suggestion of his life-long friend Thorpe be carried out (and the world will demand it), that some of his pictures should be brought together in an Elliott Gallery for a while, the collection will be his apotheosis in the Temple of Art forever, while the fund thus raised will build him a tomb where sculpture may write his epic in stone.

## III.—SOCIAL LIFE.

It was full of the light of love from dawn till sunset. His friends were all who knew him; his enemies! he had none. The loving and reverent old painters always traced the *halo* around "Mary's" head. The Rosicrucians held that each good person is surrounded by an *aura* which has something celestial in it. Where Elliott went, this *aura* seemed to go. It always came with him. Something of it seemed to linger when he went away. It was the magnetism of a fine soul, blended with the starry twinkle of white intellectual light—not of wit, which was too cold and ungenial for him. Once when a "man of genius" left the room after "scintillating away" for an hour, saying sharp things at the expense of most of his acquaintance, Elliott took my arm, and

looking into my face with one of those rosy expressions which sometimes made his always handsome face look divine, said: "There! that fellow has gone; let's get on the sunny side of the hedge now."

Elliott was supremely happy in his home, with a wife who was his angel of love and tenderness till the last hour. And he provided generously for that home, and with rare foresight and judgment put a solid thatch over the dwelling where those he loved can rest securely.

Of most men we are apt to speak of (in certain moods) "their better nature." Nobody ever made such a distinction in talking of Elliott. He had no *bad* nature. Like the finest fruit ripening in the Italian sun, one can hardly say which is the sunny side—so luscious is it all the way through. Its first petal opens on joyous air; its whole life is a blissful bath of sunshine. You have seen the large *mezzo-giorno* nectarine thus growing on the purple shore of Sorrento. And yet a stray leaf—albeit a sheltering one—had lapped over and rested on the fairest nectarine there, till some insect (the warm air swarming with them—all *little ones*) had stopped and staid there. It did not eat in far, only it did not *go away*, and it cast a shade over quite a space, and it made a spot there. But at last, just before the ingathering gardener came round, a breeze, stronger than usual, but kinder it may be too, detached that leaf, and sent it and the dead worm whirling off, and so the spot went away, only the scar remained. But who thought of that? In all the grove there had been but one such nectarine.

A triple curse on rum—so often the baneful inheritance of genius, whose path through the Gardens of Armida seems to be haunted by the infernal enchantress forever and forever!

But see how superbly this orb moved out from the clouds as he went to his setting. Elliott and I had both trod the enchanted ground—we had wandered in these upas gardens together. Years before, after I had seen half the friends of my youth go down, and my own feet were pressing the same verge, I had waked from the spell and thrown down the wine-cup. My example had saved some; my love others. But the one of all others in the wide world my soul longed for I could not win. And yet the white-robed angel of redemption was winging his blessed flight that way. I find this record in my "Life Sketch-Book:"

April 17, '68.—Called to see Elliott by appointment, to talk about the new art of coloring marbles through the entire mass, and if it were a lost art. Found him down in the saloon. He had been drinking more than usual. But his head was clear, and his heart overflowing with the richest and most generous humanity. He was alone. He listened for a few moments, and then putting his hand on my shoulder said, with a deep and tender voice, "My dear L—, I don't want to talk art to-day—I want to speak of something a great deal bigger than that! *I must stop drinking*. I have thought it all over. You know all about this business. I want to take the pledge. Can't you give it to me as a friend? It will be better so."

"I can, my dear fellow."

"Well, then, come up to the bar, and write it out



here while I take my last drink. Mind, L——, write it strong."

I wrote it. He came to the table, and slowly taking the pen and holding it a while, as he turned on me his deep, earnest gaze, said:

"Friend L——, *this is a big thing*. Think of my giving this up at my time of life! Now in my old age! And yet it must be done."

He deliberately signed his name.

"Now," he continued, "you witness it—put your name there, right under mine. Now make a duplicate of this;" which we both signed.

Putting his copy carefully in his memorandum-book, and buttoning up his coat, he drew a deep breath, and, as large, generous tears rolled, one by one, down on his breast, he said:

"It's done. Now, L——, stand by me, and it will all be well."

And so he began his new life. After a brief visit to his home at Albany he resumed his painting, and with almost incredible rapidity dismissed from his easel that series of his last priceless portraits, working hard till his work was done.

A genial writer in the *Evening Post* says:

"All the houses he occupied were models of cheerfulness. The last house he bought was formerly owned by his friend Palmer, the sculptor. His studio, in which he hoped to pass the evening of his life in quiet enjoyment, was never used. At the time when he returned, and his sickness approached, he would lie down on the sofa and look around his beautiful studio with tears. He felt that he would never paint again. About a week before he died his mind seemed to wander. On Saturday he had his pencil and pallet in bed with him, and had a vision of most

beautiful colors. His last effort was to carry his pencil to his lips, as if to wet it, and then made the familiar motion with it in his fingers, as if he were painting, and then fell into a stupor from which he never recovered. For several days he lay totally without pain, and breathed his last as quietly as if an infant had fallen asleep."

"My God, Charley, you must not die now!" This was the single loud plaint of unsubmissive sorrow that went up from a thousand of the best hearts in America. But his earthly task was done. "Home he'd gone and ta'en his wages." Apelles and Raphael, young Vandyck and old Titian, were waiting for their younger brother—the all-excelling Portrait Painter of the New World.

His brother artists bore that casket from the National Academy of Art (his proper receiving tomb) to Greenwood—a fitting train of pallbearers. But our fancy saw another and fonder procession in that evening's twilight flitting through the sacred groves of that peerless City of the Dead:

"A pall of withered leaves sad fays are bearing  
Through the long shadows of the wood-land dim,  
While mourning nymphs, their golden tresses tearing,  
Weep o'er the urn and wail the funeral hymn.

"The artist's dead! The gifted's task is ended;  
The brush and canvas lie all useless now.  
Life's picture's finished—light and shade are blended  
By the Great Master to whom all must bow."